

THE IMPACT OF ROUTINES ON PARENTAL ANXIETY AND ON EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES IN CHILDREN DURING COVID-19



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Aims and hypothesis

- There may be an association between keeping to routine during lockdown and both lower emotional and behavioural difficulties in children and lower parental anxiety
- Children of 'keyworker' parents would have fewer emotional and behavioural symptoms due to having maintained more normal routines

Methods

- Data from the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC)
- Linear regression models – to explore associations
- Carey Infant Temperament Questionnaire
- Revised Rutter Parent Scale for Preschool Children
- Measures of parental anxiety (GAD-7)

Results

- 289 parents completed questionnaires about their 411 children (average age 3.4 years)
- Keeping a routine was associated with emotional and behavioural difficulty scores 5.0 points lower (95%CI -10.0 to -0.1), $p=0.045$ than not keeping a routine (Table & Figure 1)
- Parents who reported keeping a routine had anxiety scores 4.3 points lower (95%CI -7.5 to -1.1), $p=0.009$ than those who did not (Table & Figure 2)
- Children of keyworkers had lower emotional and behavioural difficulty scores by 3.1 points (95%CI -6.26 to 0.08), $p=0.056$ than children of non-keyworkers (95% confidence interval indicates the possibility of no difference between groups (Table & Figure 3))
- Adjusting for age of child, maternal education, gender and anxiety

Conclusion

- Maintaining routine may be beneficial for children's emotional wellbeing as well as parental anxiety
- It is possible that lower parental anxiety levels made maintaining a routine easier
- Being the child of a keyworker parent during lockdown may have been protective for child emotional wellbeing

Strengths & Limitations

- Large sample, pre-pandemic data available
- Limited ethnic diversity, age & geographical spread
- Direction of causality uncertain

Acknowledgements : We are grateful to all ALSPAC participants for their time dedicated to this research project during challenging, uncertain and unprecedented period at the beginning of global pandemic.

Routine	Linear regression coefficient for emotional difficulties score
Not at all	REF
A bit the same	-1.59 (95% CI -6.31 to 3.13) $p=0.509$
A lot /Completely the same	-5.01 (95% CI -10.02 to -0.12) $p=0.045$

Table 1. Linear regression comparing the association between the extent of routine and child difficulties score

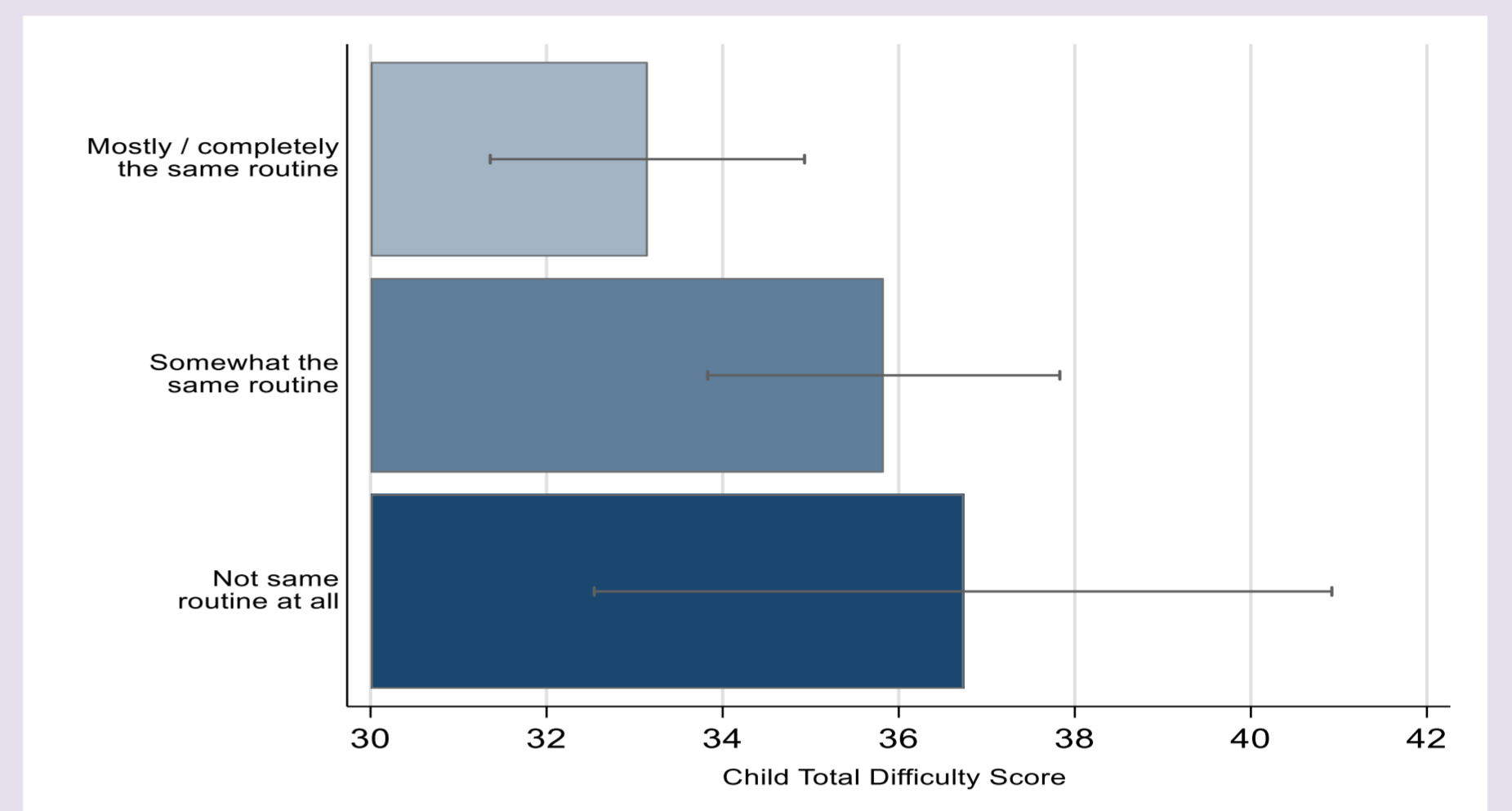


Figure 1. Covid-19 pandemic related total difficulty scores in children by keeping routine in ALSPAC.

Routine	Linear regression coefficient for maternal anxiety score
Not at all	REF
A bit the same	-4.43 (95% CI -7.60 to -1.30) $p=0.005$
A lot/Completely the same	-4.30 (95% CI -7.5 to -1.10) $p=0.009$

Table 2. Linear regression comparing the association between the extent of routine and maternal anxiety scores.

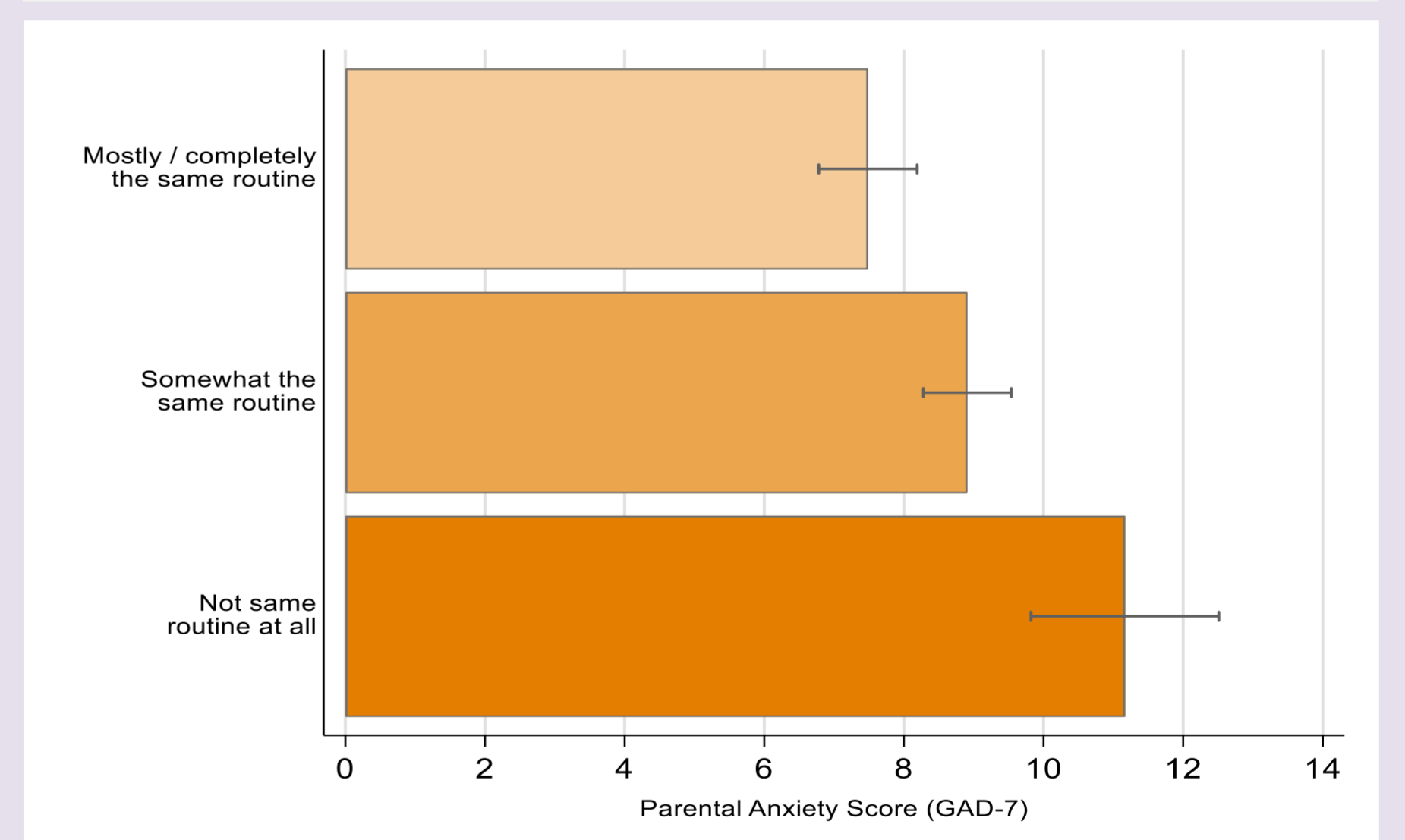


Figure 2. Covid-19 pandemic related parental anxiety score by keeping routine in ALSPAC

Keyworker status	Linear regression coefficient for emotional difficulties score
Not Keyworker	REF
Keyworker	-3.09 (95% CI -6.26 to 0.08) $p=0.056$

Table 3. Linear regression comparing the association between parental keyworker status and child difficulties scores.

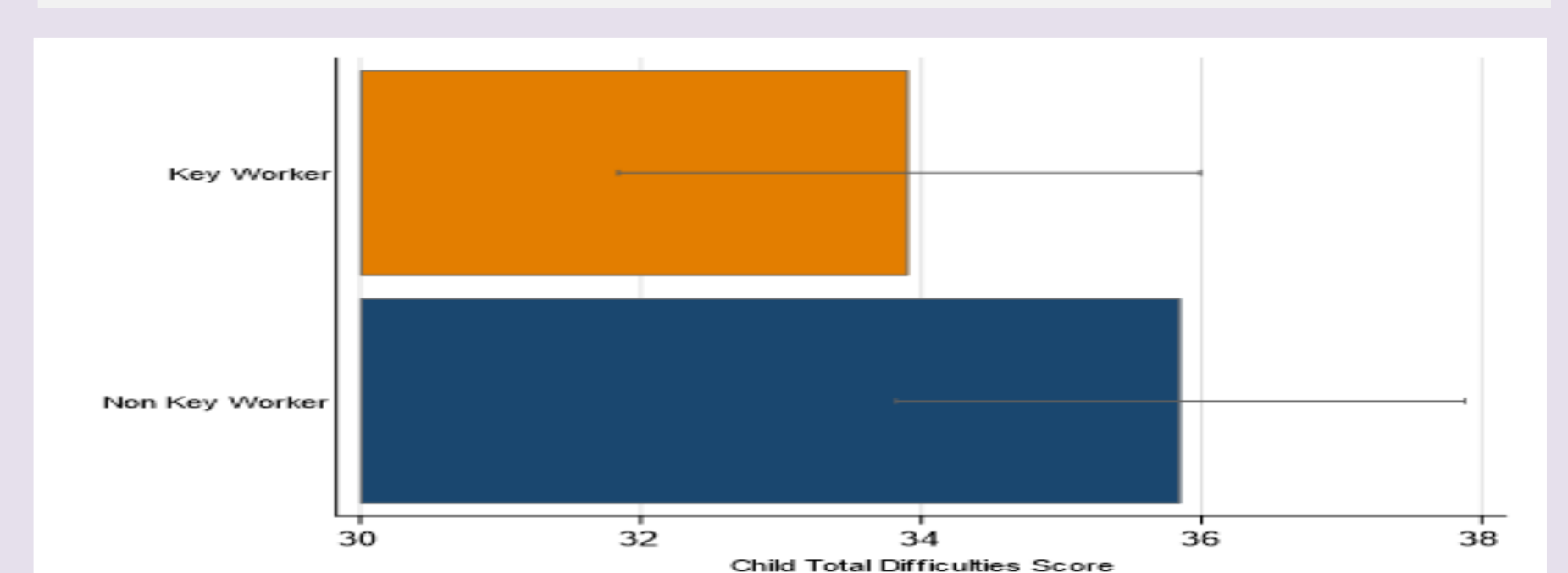


Figure 3. Difficulty scores for children of keyworkers and non keyworkers.